

HOW-TO LIBRARY Thousands of Helpful How-Tos. Countless Ideas.

10 Baby Steps to a Healthy, Happy Family

page 1 of 1

We'd love it if our families gladly ate all their vegetables, got plenty of exercise, and ditched the sodas. But proposing too many big changes at once can be overwhelming. Instead, try these 10 baby steps to help make your family healthier.



1. **Eat at least one (home-cooked) meal a day together.** This helps your family twofold. You can make sure your children are eating nutritious, well-balanced meals, and everyone can reconnect as a family.
2. **Examine your family's food choices.** Start reading the labels on the foods you buy for you and your family. Try to avoid foods with a lot of preservatives and additives. If you need a master's degree in chemistry to comprehend the list of ingredients, put it back on the shelf.
3. **Make regular trips to the doctor and the dentist.** At the doctor, make sure all vaccines are up-to-date. In addition, older family members should schedule yearly physicals and regular blood tests. When it comes to the dentist, schedule regular dental checkups every six months. Instill good dental hygiene early for your younger children by instructing every member of the family to brush and floss their teeth regularly.
4. **Unplug.** One night a week, or two nights a month, make an effort to unplug — the TV, the phone, the computer — and connect with your family. Not only is it a great time to bond, but it stimulates your mind and helps make an emotional connection.
5. **Get physical.** Everyone knows the great benefits of exercise, but finding the time to squeeze in a workout can be challenging. Rather than have your family train for a marathon, become involved in local charity walks. That way, your family will be getting exercise and helping out a worthy cause—plus, you can work the walk around everyone's schedule. Or, if you have a dog, get the family together in the evening and take your pooch for a stroll. Plan weekly bike rides; instead of going for a "Sunday drive," go for a "Sunday ride."
6. **Sleep tight.** Make sure everyone gets the recommended amount of sleep every night. Try to get your sleeping patterns on a schedule—go to bed and wake up close to the same time every day. For adults, this means a good six hours, and it varies for children depending on their age. According to experts, older teenagers do well with eight or nine hours a night, while toddlers need up to 14 hours.
7. **Reduce caffeine.** If your family consumes too much caffeine, start by reducing the intake, instead of just eliminating it altogether. Try to stay away from buying sugary sodas at the store; they contain hidden calories, as well as caffeine.
8. **Stay protected.** Limit your family's time in the sun, and make sure they wear sunscreen — especially during the summer months.
9. **Keep it clean.** Washing your hands is a little step that can go a long way on the road to good health. Make sure you teach your children to lather up before meals, after visiting the bathroom, and after touching any dirty objects or surfaces.
10. **Drink up.** Experts say drinking water can help keep you healthy and hydrated. Eight to 10 glasses every day is the recommended amount.

By taking a few minutes out of your day to follow these simple steps, you can slowly ease these lifestyle changes into your family's regular routine. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying more quality time with your loved ones, while also moving your family toward a healthier way of life.